

WILLIAM A. LITTLE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
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SECRETARY-TREASURER, ASSOCIATED GENERAL CONTRACTORS

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INTERVIEWERS: WILLIAM LITTLE

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[00:00:00] **WILLIAM LITTLE:** Beginning of tape with Dan Ruthford.

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

[00:00:20] **DANIEL RUTHFORD:** Okay now, I just told you about the University of Washington incident.

[00:00:24] **WILLIAM:** Seattle Plan, yeah.

[00:00:25] **DANIEL:** And the Seattle Plan, I believe, followed that very shortly. It was approved by the government. As a matter of fact, the Seattle Plan said that if we—if the contractors abided by the Seattle Plan, they would be in compliance, as far as minority employment was concerned. It became official. We had a hell of

a time getting the unions to go along with it but they finally did, they finally agreed to it. And I believe there was about a twelve man board made up—I wasn't on that board—but a twelve man board to administer that Plan.

Well, the damned thing fell apart after a few weeks, and the main reason that it fell apart was because the Chicanos—I'm speaking a little bit now from guess work, I'm not sure of my facts, but the Chicanos—let me try and remember. A Chicano was made the head of that committee, and I believe then that the Blacks said—well, they didn't like that. Anyway, it fell apart, mostly from the minority point of view, and they backed away from that plan. Now, it stayed in existence for a couple years, and it actually has operated to some extent even today, the Seattle Plan. But the minorities lost cohesiveness on that thing, otherwise it might have worked better than it did .

So then shortly after that—

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

So as I recall then, about the next thing that happened was the—of course the UCWA [United Construction Workers Association] came into existence along in here, too, probably a little bit before where I am now.

Then, about the next thing that happened was that we had this lawsuit finally brought by the federal government against the operating engineers, the ironworkers, and the electricians. And out of that came the Court Advisory Board and the court order pertaining to Blacks, Blacks only. I was never on the Court [Order] Advisory Committee, but I did participate in many of the hearings and many meetings on that subject, and that kind of took up the activities for probably another year. And after about a year of that, we still weren't getting real heavy participation and the goals weren't being met, and there were more shutdowns. We went for about a year there with no shut downs.

[00:03:26] **WILLIAM:** So 1971-1972 there were very little shutdowns?

[00:03:29] **DANIEL:** Yeah. The court order was here, the Seattle Plan was in effect, but it wasn't operating very well, and they had court orders. Then after about a year, when the goals weren't met by the court order decree, whatever it is, then there became another period of disturbances and shutdowns. I can remember the Seattle Community College was shut down and several projects downtown. I would guess along about in here is where the hard hats marched downtown, you would remember that if you were around here. Then the court kind of tightened up on that program a little further and got promises of more participation.

Now, as far as I know, that court order thing is still in existence. There have been quite a few people put to work under it, I don't know exactly how. I don't really think it's been as successful as anticipated. As far as I know, the Seattle Plan is still here. I don't know if it's still considered as compliance, I kind of doubt that it is. I think I remember a year or two ago, it was kind of disqualified. It was funded for a number of years, though, by the government. So unless I've left out a major event, that kind of brings you up to date.

I'll say this, something that I think is major that I left out: after the organization of the UCWA, which is strictly minority employment, then the CCA, Central Contractors Association, concentrated on minority contractors' problems, rather than employee problems, and Willie Allen got into the act. And Willie has done a hell of a job, in my opinion, in promoting the opportunity for minority subcontracting and general contracting. And he's got a real viable organization, I serve on the board of the CCA. He's got the Almby funding for his technical assistance plan for minority contractors. Last year they got I don't know how many hundreds of millions of dollars worth of work, probably not all profitable. But the CCA since the UCWA has been in existence has been

almost strictly for subcontractors rather than for employees. Even though the progress is slow, it's been steady. I think Willie would tell you that if you sit down and talk to him.

I don't know what else to tell you, unless you want to ask me some specific questions.

[00:06:37] **WILLIAM:** Yeah I think I would like to ask you some questions regarding the role of the—not just your role, but in terms of the politics that was being played by the contractors, association of contractors. There's obviously some politics...

[00:06:54] **DANIEL:** Obviously all the contractors weren't in favor of really going all out to try and solve the problem.

[00:07:00] **WILLIAM:** Of course, that's what I'm trying to get at.

[00:07:03] **DANIEL:** But I think the majority—because maybe a few of us started out and were sincere in recognizing the problem, number one, and number two, sincerely trying to do something about it. I think a lot of them become convinced that something had to be done. [phone rings]

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

It was a small portion of the AGC that was in favor of trying to do something about this, and I would say that it didn't take too long to convince the majority of the members that we had a problem and we really needed to do something about it. Certainly it's not 100% today, but I would venture to say that 75% of the contractors recognize the problem and want to do more than is being done.

[00:07:57] **WILLIAM:** Well, I guess that's about it, except I had some question about in the beginning, some things seem to be some discrepancy in my material in that, did the CCA and the AGC come to any agreement at an initial point in time on any kind of policy to place [?minority?] workers, and the union took it [as] pulling people off the job and then empowered the court to? Was there an agreement?

[00:08:26] **DANIEL:** Yeah, the AGC and the CCA came to early agreement, like in the first six months. And we had many meetings, and we came to an agreement. And then we tried to force it, and there were confrontations with the unions, where the union pulled people off the job. And I don't know that we ever, to this day, have complete agreement between the AGC, the contractors, the CCA, and the union. And I think this led to the court order.

[00:09:03] **WILLIAM:** Okay, but initially the CCA and AGC came to—

[00:09:06] **DANIEL:** Had agreement, right. And we went jointly, we backed the same airplane.

[00:09:10] **WILLIAM:** Okay, do you have a copy of that agreement that you initially made?

[00:09:13] **DANIEL:** Let me see if I've still got my files, that was a long time ago. I did keep—I've got about four different agreements that were made, maybe I can find [inaudible] .

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

Let's assume that this problem really started boiling around here around 1968, does that ring a bell with you, approximately?

[00:09:39] **WILLIAM:** That's correct.

[00:09:40] **DANIEL:** Then we started having demonstrations. Excuse me, I got—

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

... '68, and we experienced a number of job shut downs by the CCA. At that point, none of our projects, our incoming projects were involved. Then we started to have some meetings with the CCA, I was representing Associated General Contractors.

[00:10:23] **WILLIAM:** Are you talking about the governor's meeting or the county executive's meeting?

[00:10:26] **DANIEL:** No, I'm just talking locally now, we started having some meetings with the AGC and the CCA; and in some instances, the unions; and in some instances, government representatives, agency representatives.

[00:10:45] **WILLIAM:** What particular agency?

[00:10:46] **DANIEL:** What was it? OFC [sic, Office of Federal Contract Compliance] , Jim Warren's organization; OEC [sic] , I forget the name, but Equal [Employment] Opportunity [Commission] in any event. Alright.

[00:11:05] **WILLIAM:** This was after the shutdowns?

[00:11:07] **DANIEL:** This was when they started. They started now, we're starting to get some shutdowns. [Interruption by messenger]

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

At this point in time, I think I as well as many of the other contractors felt that we were not discriminating. But becoming involved in this problem, first I was elected chairman of the minority problem for the contractors, I was already chairman of the [Management and] Minority Committee, so I was right in the middle of this thing. And over a period of months, I never have changed my mind that I didn't discriminate in this business. But I became 100% convinced that there was discrimination and that I was just as guilty as the next guy because I wasn't doing anything about it. I'm trying to be real candid with you, that's what you wanted.

[00:12:25] **WILLIAM:** That's correct.

[00:12:28] **DANIEL:** So then my own mind I made up, was that something should be done about it, And in the meantime, we've got periodic shutdowns. So it seemed to most people, I think including the minorities, that it was headed at that time by Tyree Scott, the CCA. Jim Takasaki was heavily involved, Ben McAdoo, several others, I can't remember their names. And we met like every other day for a while. It seemed to the minorities and the contractors that the way to solve this problem was to involve the unions. And so we had several meetings with the unions, trying to agree on some kind of a program that would start putting Blacks and other minorities to work in the construction industry, more than just laborers and cement finishers.

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

Well, okay, so we're starting to have these meetings with three parties: CCA, Associated General Contractors, and the unions. We had about a ten point program almost agreed to one day with those three parties, which I

think if we'd agreed to, it might have been a whole different picture. I think we'd have been able to do a lot more than we were able to do. But the CCA and the contractors agreed, but there was one or two minor points that the unions wouldn't agree to. I have a big file somewhere, I don't even know if I still got it around here, where I used to keep all the minutes of those meetings, but I remember that. And then that meeting broke up, and we did not reach agreement. We had one or two more, and the more we met with the unions after that, the further apart we got. Then it seemed to the CCA and the contractors that we weren't going to make an agreement with the unions, so we ought to try and work out a program between the contractors and the CCA with the government approval and with possibly some government funding. We had involvement from the Port of Seattle, City of Seattle, and University of Washington and several others who agreed with this premise that the CCA and the contractors ought to work out a program to involve more minority employees in construction.

We made several trips to Washington, D.C. and maybe like six months has gone by, by now. And we tried to get Department of Labor approval of a program, we went back there. We drafted a program jointly, we went back and tried to sell it. On one of our trips back, I forget whether it was the first or the second one, we sat down early in the morning with the Department of Labor. Art Fletcher came in—you know Art, don't you?—who was the officer of contract compliance at that time. He was in agreement with what we were trying to do and if we'd stay there and work this program out, maybe make some modifications to it that were acceptable to the Department of Labor, we could go back with an approved program. So we worked all day long, right through lunch, all of us. There were maybe about fifteen or twenty of us, minorities and contractors and representatives from the city, state, the University of Washington, Port, were back there on this trip. And we reached an agreement, actually, late in the afternoon, that the Department of Labor, the minorities, and the contractors were agreeable to a program that it would be partially funded by the Department of Labor. And we were sitting around there waiting to have this agreement finally typed so that we could all sign it, and Art Fletcher and Mr. [George] Schultz, who was then the Secretary of Labor, came in [at] about six o'clock and said, "Well, we're very sorry, boys. I misled you. Unbeknownst to us, some of the Department of Labor people today were out in Seattle, and they're talking to the unions, and we can't make an agreement with you." So we came home empty handed on that trip.

[00:17:45] **WILLIAM:** When was that?

[00:17:46] **DANIEL:** Well as I say, the problem really started—you said '69? This is about six months after the problem started, when we started having shutdowns, so it was the winter of 1969, let's say, about in that area. And so we all came back to Seattle and complained and talked on the telephone to Washington [D.C.] , had more meetings with the labor unions, and we weren't getting anywhere.

[00:18:19] **WILLIAM:** Now, they weren't there? They didn't go to D.C.?

[00:18:21] **DANIEL:** No, they didn't go back with us. We decided at that point, see, to break away from them and try to make an agreement between the contractors and the minorities that the government approved, because we couldn't make an agreement. We hadn't been able to make an agreement with the union, where we had the three party agreement. So then the union, at this point, was trying to sell their—I think it was outreach, they called it at that time, which was they were going to go out and try to get apprentices and so forth, that's what they were pushing.

There was a split back in the Department of Labor, those that were trying to work and do what the unions wanted and those that were trying to work to do what the minorities and contractors were trying to put together, and we just didn't make any progress. So then we had more shut downs. And then everybody was working hard, including the University, Ernie Conrad who was vice president of Finance was heavily involved, and myself,

and Dick Ford of the Port of Seattle, and people from the City, and Tyree Scott and his assistants, and a few other contractors. Don Close especially was one of the lead men for the electrical subcontractors. So we kept talking by telephone and letters and so forth to Washington, D.C. and weren't making any progress on getting an approved plan.

So finally we decided, well okay, we can't make any progress in Washington, D.C. so let's try at the state level. So we met with Governor [Daniel] Evans and some of his assistants, minorities, and the contractors, and these local awarding authorities. And we said, "Look we got a problem, the contractors need to comply with equal opportunity, the minorities need jobs, the unions won't cooperate, we can't make a three party agreement, but we want something. Will you help us?" And they said oh yeah, they would help us. So the next thing that comes to my mind is that we had a big meeting in Olympia one night, in which the governor was present, in the governor's office, and the minorities were there in full force, the contractors were there, and the unions were there, and we tried to work out a program there. We made little progress, a little, damn little, and the meeting broke up when the union representative, the lead speaker for the union representative, got up in the meeting and said, "Piss on it," and walked out. That's the way that meeting ended.

[00:21:07] **WILLIAM:** That was Austin St. Laurent?

[00:21:08] **DANIEL:** That was Austin St. Laurent, you bet. So then the governor and his people, well, they were pretty interested in it by this time, and they saw first hand that we weren't going to get any place with the unions, so they volunteered to help us work this out with the federal government.

And so we drew up another plan. We'd had several plans by this time, and we drew up a new plan. I don't remember what we called it at this point, but we got representatives of the governor's office, as well as the University, and myself, Tyree Scott, and we made another trip back to Washington, D.C. And we said, "Look, now the governor wants this, we got the state behind us, we got the city behind us, we got all these awarding authorities that want this plan to get minorities involved, now we want you to approve it. If you don't want to fund it, that's fine, but at least approve it. Approve the plan so we can put it into operation."

This was the third and last trip that we made back to Washington, D.C. We started out in the morning, with one segment of the Department of Labor, and we explained the whole plan to them again, and yeah, they said it sounded good. And all of us spoke our peace, Tyree said he liked the plan, and all the awarding agencies. I was speaking for the contractors, we wanted it, and we more or less convinced this group, I forget what they call them now. Anyway, they were the money men in the Department of Labor, it came under a fellow by the name of [?Webber?] at that time. They said, "But we can't approve it unless you get approval from the Capitol." And we said, "Well, how do we get that?"

"Well, you got to go up and talk with Magnuson or Jackson, or somebody like that, and if they tell us to approve it, we'll approve it." So we got an appointment with both Magnuson and Jackson, and we all trooped from the Department of Labor up there, and we had our meeting. We convinced Jackson and Magnuson that what we had was good, and they agreed to call up the president's office and recommend it and set up an appointment with us in the White House.

We went from the Capitol to the White House. At the White House, of course, the president wasn't available, and Ehrlichman was not available. Well, we met with Todd [?Hulland?] who was Ehrlichman's assistant, and we explained the whole problem to him. We got his backing on the program. And so he said, "Well, I'll call the Department of Labor and tell them you've got the Executive Branch approval on this thing." So we thought that we'd had it all set, and we went back to the Department of Labor, and now it's the end of the day. We go in there about 4:30 to meet with them. We got a whole new group of people that we hadn't seen in the morning,

and we told them what we'd done all day, and we're back here, and now we had it all settled. And they said, "Well, we're sorry, but we're not the right people. The right people you got to talk to are the people you talked to this morning, and they're all gone. They've all left town." So that was the end of that romance.

So we come back from Washington, D.C. empty-handed again. Now by this time, the governor, we come back and report to him what had happened, so he's getting real exercised. So he calls back there, and he raises a little hell, talks to Ehrlichman, really pushing for us. But really nothing, we didn't accomplish anything. We never got anything approved on that effort. Like we've been doing this for about a year. Now we're into about 1970.

[00:24:50] **WILLIAM:** Okay, I need to go back. Was the demonstrations still going on at this time?

[00:24:56] **DANIEL:** Off and on. Like we would be in heavy meetings, and we were back in Washington, no disturbances at that time. But we would come home and maybe two or three weeks would go by and nothing had happened, so we'd have another demonstration.

[00:25:08] **WILLIAM:** Okay, was this the time before they shut the airport down or after? It's before, right? These meetings were held after?

[00:25:18] **DANIEL:** I can't honestly tell you, I don't remember. Maybe about the time frame I'm in now. Like, we come back from Washington, we've been back there three times, we have been to the governor's office many times, we had lots of meetings, and no results, really. And maybe about this time is when the airport shut down.

[00:25:36] **WILLIAM:** Okay, yeah, I see now.

[00:25:37] **DANIEL:** About a year after it all started. You know, it really first started at the University of Washington. You remember, the first shut down was at the University of Washington.

[00:25:46] **WILLIAM:** Garfield High School.

[00:25:46] **DANIEL:** Was it Broadway High School?

[00:25:47] **WILLIAM:** Garfield and then King County, then the University.

[00:25:50] **DANIEL:** Then the University. Some people got hurt out at the University. That was back in the beginning. So now, we still haven't really accomplished a hell of a lot. And the Governor is 100% behind us, he's trying to help us get something approved in Washington [D.C.] , but we never get anything approved. And I'd say a good year had gone by, and maybe we went along for a couple more months, and nothing. Not even any meetings, or nothing.

So then all of a sudden, I get a call at home one Monday morning, about four o'clock in the morning, from the University of Washington saying, "We need you to come down to the campus right away. The CCA has taken over your hospital job. Fifty, sixty members of the CCA have taken it over, and they've taken your locks off and put their own locks on. They've taken over possession of the your job, will you please come in?" So I came down there, five o'clock in the morning, and walked into the room away from the job at the University and here's like two hundred policemen in the back room, all ready to go in and take repossession of the job. And the police tell me that they want me to sign a statement that the CCA is trespassing, and then they'll go in and take it over by force. So Ernie Conrad and I and Don Close talked it over and said, well, I asked them, I said, "Somebody is likely to get hurt, aren't they?"

“Well yeah, somebody is likely to get hurt.”

So then we decided, “Well, I would get a hold of Tyree Scott on the telephone, who was inside the project, and see if I could start some negotiations.” So I talked to Tyree and I said, “Well look, if you don’t let us come in, I’ve got all these policemen out here, so we’d like to talk to you about it.” He says, “I’ll call you back.” So in about an hour he called me back and said, “Ok, we’ll talk, if you come down here, just the three of you: you and Ernie Conrad and Don Close. You come down here, we’ll let you in, and we’ll talk.”

So I got in there, it was still dark [outside] , Ernie Conrad and Don Close and I, and we talked until noon. And this was from it’s still dark in the morning, six o’clock, maybe, I don’t know. And the CCA said, “Well, the only way that we’ll move out of here is if you get the governor to come out and talk to us. So I got a hold of the governor on the phone, he was in Seattle, and I told him what was going on, and he said, “Well, are you in any danger?” And I said, “No, I don’t think we’re in any danger. I’m not worried.” It was a pretty violent situation though, a lot of damage done that day. And I said, “I don’t think we’re in any danger.” And he said, “Well, see if you can’t convince them to leave, and if you can’t, call me back.” He was here was some ceremony. He says, “I’ll come out if I have to.” Well, anyway at noon, we reached a tentative settlement with what the CCA wanted, and we made some promises of what we’d try to do to get this thing moving again, and they left.

And so we worked, some more. Now, we did start to make a little progress after this, cause after that, I think , shortly right after that at least, the Seattle Plan emerged. Now, the unions were supposed to be involved in this.